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TESTIMONY given by Coco Newton at House Health Policy Committee

My name is Coco Newton. I am a Registered Dietitian (RD) and a Certified Clinical Nutritionist (CCN). I have been a member of MDA since 1981. 20 years ago I served as Chair of the Legislative and Licensure Committee, and I was involved in some of the original drafting of the licensure bill for dietitians. 20 years ago, it was difficult to find a qualified nutritionist other than the RD, since advanced degreed, board certified nutrition professional organizations were not in existence.

20 years later, this is no longer true. Other organizations, including but not limited to the International and American Associations of Clinical Nutritionists ( CCN ) and the American College of Nutrition (CNS) meet or exceed the qualifications to become an RD. I obtained my CCN credential, because the ADA could not provide any training in functional medicine or integrative nutrition therapy. These organizations go far beyond the traditional training of the RD, in the application of nutritional biochemistry and metabolism in human nutrition. Over 100 RD's in the US have completed the CCN training. Other professionals who obtain their CCN credential include nurses, MDs, pharmacists, dentists, chiropractors, etc MDA does not recognize the qualifications of these "other nutritionists", claiming that only the RD is qualified to be a nutritionist

My position: I support licensure for dietitians and nutritionists but not the way this bill is worded, because it is overly restrictive. At this point no licensure bill is better than this licensure bill

Today, I am not here to represent any particular special interest group, however, I have communicated with numerous health professionals throughout the state that are opposed to SB403.

I am here to tell you why I believe SB 403 does more to protect the profession of the RD, giving us sole domain over the title/practice of nutritionist than it does to protect the public.

Let me share some quotes from the MDA LINK, a publication of the MDA- can be viewed on the MDA website:

"Many professionals are attempting to encroach upon the dietitian's scope of practice...indicating they are nutrition specialists. Dietitians must make legislators think of the RD as the sole expert on health nutrition".

"We should be the one professional everyone looks to for nutrition services"

“Under the current registration system, only the self-motivated and qualified nutrition professionals join (ADA-MDA), and the unqualified practitioners are free to practice without reliable standards and continuing education. Licensure will require all practitioners to meet our standards for education and experience which will greatly increase the protection for all patients in Michigan”

The CCN, CNS and other qualified nutritionists would be considered one of those “unqualified” nutritionists

When I inquired about the fairness of this licensure bill regarding other qualified nutrition professionals, this was the response from MDA we represent MDA not CCN. If the CCN's are interested in getting licensed in MI they will need to organize as such.

MDA Documentation of Harm Contest- example of immature and unprofessional attempt to target unqualified nutritionists

#### TRUTH

I believe that licensure of the nutritionist is beneficial, but the criteria must be inclusive of other qualified nutritionists too

Dietitians are not the only nutrition experts

All dietitians are nutritionists

Not all nutritionists are dietitians

It is not necessary to be a dietitian to be a qualified nutritionist

Licensing the dietitian/nutritionist in Michigan via CDR requirements deliberately ignores and prevents the public from accessing qualified nutritionists, other than the RD

No licensure bill is better than SB403

So, instead of dietitians trying to garner the legal title and practice of nutrition in Michigan, our discussions should focus on developing selective but fair criteria of education and training to be licensed as a nutritionist.

Illinois is a good example among several other states that have fair criteria for licensure.

For starters, Illinois allows RD's, CCNs, CNS to practice side by side

SB403 MI practice board would be comprised of 5 RDs and 2 public members

The licensing exam would be that of the CDR

Illinois 2 dietitians, 2 nutrition counselors (not RDs), 1 MD, 1 nurse, 1 public member

The licensing exam may include an examination given by the CDR

38% of CDR exam is non clinical (food service, sanitation, food science...)

It's clear that that SB 403 restricts other qualified advanced degreed clinical nutritionists, and is written more for self interest than public interest!

Fraud is rampant in the nutrition field. Self styled nutritionists with all sorts of letters after their names, often paid for online with quasi at home study programs and at home exams are all over the place. They are persuasive, often work for MLMs, and there is no way for the public to discern who's for real or not. A licensure bill would help protect the public by recognizing qualified nutritionists, be they dietitians, doctors, chiropractors, nurses, etc who have met the education and clinical practice requirements.

20 years ago is a long time ago. Change is inevitable. Nutrition does not belong to the dietitian only. To try to manipulate the other nutrition competition through a licensure law is self-righteous and does a disservice to the public by restricting their access to other qualified nutritionists



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